WHIRRAKEE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
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Office Bearers for 2011 - 2012

President	Jan Orr	5443 5668
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Minute Secretary	Anne Bridley	
Treasurer	Ben Goonan	
Membership Officer	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Excursion organiser	*position vacant*	
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan	
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Whirrakee contact	Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	Rod Orr	5443 5668

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Anne Bridley, Glenise Moors, Joy Clusker, Kerrie Norris, John Lindner.

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Fauna Study Group: Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)
Regular fauna excursions take place most Fridays. See page 11 for details.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 33, No. 7, August 2012

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
In August, the club conducted a very successful SEANA camp with well over 100 participants. Anne Bridley's article on page 8 gives a good summary of the events, and Liz Martin managed to get several pieces into the local newspapers to heighten awareness of the club's activities. While August was a very good month to show our natural treasures to our visitors, September is probably the best month in the Bendigo bush calendar. Unfortunately our enjoyment of our spring wildflowers and animal activities this year is marred by the threat of control burns in the very near future. My admiration goes to our club members and to other members of the communit,y who are constantly putting in submissions and speak to fire planners and council officials in order to minimise the damage to our wonderful bushland.

Front page photographer: Liz Martin

What are all these field naturalists looking at? They were part of the August SEANA Whipstick excursion. The object that has taken their interest is pictured on page 5.

Short Notices

November Excursion

A club excursion to the Kamarooka forest is planned for November 17. On the agenda are birds (incl. evidence of mallee fowl), plants and the eucalyptus distillery. Noel Ruedin, son of Lorna and Leon Ruedin, who once operated the factory will be speaking to the participants. Please check out the destination and detail on page 9 and 10.

A belated thank you

Ed: In May Nicole Howie asked me to thank the club, and in particular two members for their support during a school activity. I have only just (accidentally) re-discovered her note of thanks, so my sincere apologies for its lateness...

"Huntly Primary School staff and students would like to thank John Lindner and Stuart Fraser for their assistance recently. Grade 5/6 students visited the former Huntly Police Pound where John and Stuart conducted hands-on activities to encourage the students to make discoveries about the flora, fauna and history of this significant piece of remnant vegetation in Huntly's town centre. The children were very engaged and it was a fantastic introduction to the site. We will continue using the site for environmental education and hope to play a part in enhancing the site in future."

A first spring walk

by Dale Little

Peter and I had the first of or "regular' spring walks at One Tree Hill on Sunday (26/8). The day was cool and overcast with an occasional burst of sunshine. The area looked colourful with plenty of wax flowers, *Hardenbergia* and acacias. There were some large patches of several species of greenhood orchids as well (see photos on page 4). In one spot, we saw a very pink wax flower and in another a very large flowered version and wondered whether we were lucky enough to find one of the rare forms mentioned in the club's publication (see photo on page 4). We were a little disappointed to read that a controlled burn was to take place there very shortly as we saw much evidence of the flora bounty that was yet to come. Our thought were that the timing was poor as most visitors to the area would come to see the spring display.

The flowering plants seen were:
Early Nancy - *Wurmbea dioicia*
Leopard orchid - *Diuris maculata*
Dwarf geenhoods - *Pterostylis nana*
Nodding greenhoods - *Pterostylis nutans*
Tall Greenhoods - *Pterostylis longifolia*
Golden everlastings - *Bracteantha viscosa*
Gorse Bitter Bush - *Davisia ulicifolia*
Purple Coral pea - *Hardenbergia violacea*
Primrose Goodenia - *Goodenia blackiana*
Spreading Wattle - *Acacia genistifolia*
Golden Wattle - *Acacia pycantha*
Hedge wattle - *Acacia paradoxa*
Cats Claws - *Grevillia alpina*
Fairy Wax Flower - *Philotheca verrucosa*
Rice Flower - *Pimelia* sp??

Other observations: We had a wonderful sighting of several White-cheeked honeyeaters and a Scarlet Robin, two kangaroos and several "diggings" of echidnas.
Both Peter and I look forward to building on these observations over the coming months.

Landcare Week 2012

Northern Bendigo Landcare group invite you to the **Bendigo Creek Walk 'n' Talk**
9.30am, Sunday 9th September

Participants meet at the Bendigo Botanic Gardens, White Hills at 9.30am. The walk is relatively demanding (approx. 2.5 hours), so requires a reasonable fitness of participants. This is a free event, but bookings are essential. Please RSVP before Wednesday 5th September to Nicole Howie on 54488244 or dnhowie@bigpond.com

Bring your own snacks, water bottle, sunscreen, hat, camera, binoculars, notebook etc. and wear suitable clothing/footwear. Lunch will be provided at the Botanic Gardens.

Spring is coming…to One Tree Hill Photos by Dale Little

Tall Greenhood (*Pterostylis longifolia*) ↑ Nodding Greenhood (*Pterostylis nutans*) ↑

↓ The beautiful Bendigo wax is very variable; this is a particularly lovely and very pink one.

A SEANA winter camp: Impressions of a cold and colourful weekend

Here is what all those people on the front cover were looking at, a male red-headed mouse spider, *Missulena occatoria*. The two top photos (from Liz Martin) were taken in the Whipsticl forest, where the Whirrakee wattle, in spite of the cold weather was alrady blooming profusely. ↓

Field Naturalists can easily move amongst built-up areas, although they never look quite in their element. On the left are the SEANA participants on an 'urban walk'. Below (right) are the visitors on the 'bats and boxes' walk in Rosalind Park and below (left) is an unidentified moth from the workshop (photos by Joy Clusker)

Some more Spring images (the first three of these beautiful photos, taken by Liz Martin, have appeared in the 'Advertiser' on the 29th August, but some members may have missed them…)

Clockwise: Milkmaid, *Burchardia umbellata*; Flying Duck Orchid, *Caleana major*. ← Cats Claws, *Grevillea alpina* and Sticky Everlasting *Bracteantha viscosa* ↓

Xerula australis ↑ at Mandurang. Fungi are still very beautiful, even as spring approaches (photo by Joy Clusker)

Blue Caladenia, *Caladenia caerulea* ↓

Here are two images from the August Family Nature club activity in the Whipstick at Kamarooka. It was about birds and presented by Nicole Howie. It was a cold morning but lots of fun and concluded with nest building. (Photos by Joy Clusker)

And somewhere further away… Idalia National Park. Photo and text (on page 10) by Mal Hayson

Report on SEANA Campout, Bendigo 17 – 20 August

Author: Anne Bridley

We had some trepidation about the weather, but after rain on Friday the rest of the weekend was fine, although cold and windy at times. The timing, late winter, gave us an opportunity to visit our forests just as the spring flowers were getting going.

We had nearly 120 participants from 20 FN clubs, about 26 from Bendigo. The event was well organised, and gave us glimpses of some of the best that our modified landscapes offer. Full day excursions included tours of the Whipstick and Kamarooka (led by Matt Comer), Wellsford forest and the Axedale sand belt (Rod Orr), Pilchers Bridge NCR and other forests south-east of Bendigo (myself) and of wetlands including Tang Tang swamp to the north and others to the west (Ben Goonan).

The program was varied with a geology excursion to Lake Eppalock and Heathcote ably led by Eric Wilkinson and a trip to Mt Alexander and Harcourt to look at geology and vegetation (Ern Perkins).

Half day excursions covered the Bendigo Waste Water Treatment Plant (Jane Cleary), southern Whipstick (also led by Jane), One Tree Hill (Matt Comer), civic ecology at Kennington Reservoir (Bill Holsworth), graptolites (Phil Dyson), historical urban Bendigo (Jim Evans), bats and boxes (Kerrie Norris, Maurie Lewis, Bill Holsworth) and a look at geology and historic water infrastructure at Sedgwick (Rob Moors).

The wetlands and Heathcote geology trips were run as pre-booked bus trips, an innovation that we hope future SEANA camps will continue. The wetlands trip was well oversubscribed.

Lyn Hamilton, John Lindner, Glenise Moors, Jan Orr, Joy Clusker, Simon Hay and Pam and Anthony Sheehan had the task of helping to keep wandering field nats in line on the trips. John got the ball rolling on organising the excursions.

Kath Thompson, Bev Leeson and Janet Justin kept us fed and watered at suppertime. Kerrie Norris made sure that special dietary requirements were catered for (this was much appreciated). Bev and Elaine Matheson (with assistance from Ben and Jane) looked after registrations on the weekend.

Simon Hay, Stuart Fraser, Rod Orr, John Lindner, Richard Goonan, Ben Goonan and others from the organising committee helped set up the hall and provided displays. Richard and Rob Moors also assisted with the organisation of the excursion convoys early each morning.

Diana Collier was on the organising committee and made an acknowledgment of the Jaara people on Friday night.

Ben Goonan (with contributions from trip leaders) was responsible for producing the first mailout and the attractive and informative program booklet, which was very well received by participants.
He also acted as treasurer for the campout and kept track of registrations as they came in.

Liz Martin took photos and wrote an article which appeared in the Bendigo Weekly.

Our speakers (organised by Ben Goonan) were excellent. Rob Moors introduced the event with an overview of Bendigo's past and present and Peter Ellis touched us with his music on Friday night. I had been particularly looking forward to Marilyn Hewish's and Steve Williams' presentation on moths on Saturday evening. I was not disappointed. Marilyn and Steve and Ken Harris may have been, because they announced that the result of their moth watching afterward was the worst night ever in Bendigo. Sunday night's effort was slightly more rewarding, with 6 different moths recorded.

The Sunday night gathering gave an opportunity for a celebration of SEANA's 50th birthday and some reminiscences. Thanks to Annette Mouat for the delicious birthday cake. Dr. Jenny Shield showed us that spiders are very site specific and that irrigated pasture has a different suite of spider species to native woodland.

Monday's informal gathering at No. 7 reservoir gave us a chance to relax. Kerrie Norris showed us the BFNC Fauna Groups' collection of animal specimens. These were prepared as museum specimens by group members under the guidance of Bill Holsworth and were of great interest. We learnt more about the history of our water supply from ranger Miles Geldard. The visitors were impressed by our new park and enjoyed themselves in spite of the cold weather.

There were many highlights of this great weekend, but some were:

- Hundreds of migrating Welcome Swallows were swooping low around us at the Bendigo Waste Water Treatment Plant. They were also hawking over the ponds and along Bendigo Creek. We had wonderful views of several Fairy and Tree Martins among the swallows. As they were very close and below eye level we could easily distinguish the two species.
- Four Brolgas, a Spotted Harrier and a Black Kite were seen near Tang Tang swamp. Ancient River

Red Gums, a Pallid Cuckoo and the nationally significant *Pimelea spinescens* were also highlights for participants on the wetland excursion.

- Several large patches of Nodding Greenhoods amazed us at Pilchers Bridge NCR.
- The completely unexpected sightings of a Nankeen Night Heron and a Great Egret at a small dam on the edge of the Mandurang forest (Greater Bendigo NP) on Costas Rd.
- The beautiful unburnt grassy and herb rich understorey in Sims Rd, Pilchers Bridge NCR.
- A Grey-headed Flying-fox in the Rosalind Park fernery had a radio transmitter. This is one of three animals tagged here with a transmitter.
- Whirrakee and Golden Wattles and a hybrid between the two were all flowering in the Wellsford forest.
- Big trees in Pilchers Bridge NCR and near Ellesmere Rd in the Wellsford.
- The fantastic Boronia patch delighted those who walked in to see it.

I would particularly like to thank our President Jan Orr who took on the main role of chief organiser and rememberer of all the innumerable details that went into making the weekend a success.

BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB NOVEMBER 2012 EXCURSION

DATE: Saturday 17 November 2012 (weekend after the general meeting)

LEADER/ORGANISER: John Lindner

LOCATION: Kamarooka Forest section of the Greater Bendigo National Park

SUBJECTS: Eucalyptus distilling and its history. Plants . Birds (especially evidence of the Mallee Fowl, now extinct in this area)

ATTRACTIONS

Typical small mallee fowl mound. The big mallee fowl mound (see August *Whirrakee)*. Ruedin's eucalyptus distillery with its dwelling and various old machinery. Mallee eucalypt species (Blue, Bull, Green, Kamarooka). Wildflowers and birds

MODE OF TRAVEL

Driving with some moderately long and short walks

GUEST SPEAKER AND GUIDE

Noel Ruedin, son of Lorna and Leon Ruedin who once operated the factory we will see. History of the distillery and reminiscences about the Whipstick

MAP: A map of the area will be available

MEETING at BFNC clubrooms, 8.30 am

CAR TRAVEL DETAILS
Out to Huntly via Midland Highway. Up the Tennyson Road to the track into Ruedin's eucalyptus distillery . Move over to Clays Road (Kamarooka East Road) to look at various flora, including Kamarooka Mallee. Total return distance is about 80 km.

COST
We will car pool as much as possible. It is suggested that passengers contribute $5 towards the cost of driving the car they are in.

WALK DETAILS
1. 2 km along narrow bush track to Ruedin's eucalyptus distillery (= 4 k return)
Note: You must carry your own food and water, preferably in a backpack, to the distillery where we will have morning tea and lunch. We may be able to have one car to take people in who are unable to walk this distance.
2. 0.5 km along track to the big mallee fowl mound (= 1.0 km return)
3. 0.5 km around the bush at Clays Road. Total walking distance is therefore is about 5.5 – 6.0 km.

WHAT TO WEAR AND BRING
Cool, cover-up clothing
Hat
Sturdy walking shoes or boots
Water
Morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea
Binoculars
Camera

Naturally Loddon – A Wonderland in Spring
This festival is taking place between September 1 and October 7.
See www.loddon.vic.gov.au for details

A brief note in praise of Idalia

by Mal Haysom

Idalia National Park is within the Cooper Creek catchment, South West Queensland. It is one of several parks in the south west region. For access to, and driving within, the park a 4WD vehicle is required. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service stresses the need to prepare your vehicle for remote area driving when visiting parks in this region.

The northern part of the park – that part accessible to visitors – is on a mesa plateau that overlooks the surrounding plains. The plateau is cut by gorges; the resulting landscape is varied and presents a diversity of animal life and vegetation. A hint of the variety of tree types can be seen looking west from Wave Rock (note the foliage colours) (see image page 7). The tree species are (but of course, are not limited to) brigalow, lancewood, mulga, poplar box, mountain yapunyahs and Dawson gums.

The park is home for several species of wallabies: the yellow-footed rock wallaby, the swamp wallaby, black striped wallaby and the bridled nailtail wallaby. The latter species was prolific in 1880 but the population rapidly declined as a result of hunting and habitat alteration, and by the 1930s was thought to be extinct. However a fencer recognized one in 1973 and the re-establishment program that was introduced has been very successful.

The weather at the time of our visit in the middle of August was ideal. The days were sunny and temperatures in the mid-twenties. The nights were clear, star-lit and sharp-chilly – a good test of the thermal properties of our swag! The accessible area of the park is compact and all the marked features – each worth a visit – are readily accessible by vehicle and moderate length walks.

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday September 12 7.30pm
Chris Jones from the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions, School of Botany, University of Melbourne will talk about 'Monitoring and management of riparian vegetation in the Victorian Riverina'

Wednesday October 10 7.30pm
Dr Gregory Holland, Research Fellow, Faculty of Science and Technology, School of Life and Environ-mental Sciences, Deakin University: 'Fire in box-ironbark forests: an experimental investigation of ecological outcomes'

Wednesday November 14 7.30pm
Professor Max Finlayson, Director, Centre of Research Excellence:Institute for Land, Water and Society, Charles Sturt University: 'The biodiversity crisis – globally and Australia'

Club Excursions
An excursion is planned for November 17 to the Kamarooka Forest section of the Greater Bendigo National Park. See page 9 and 10 for details.

Regular Fauna Excursions
Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30 the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone and go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30, then the excursion is not on.

Family Nature Club
The next activity (September 16) will involve wildflower rambling. Please register if you are turning up with family, or let Jan and Rod know if you intend to offer assistance.
Check out their 2011 and 2012 activities at http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com/

Registration:
Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

Defending Environmental Laws – Protecting the Places you Love
A free seminar for community groups and individuals, jointly organized by VNPA, BDEC and Environment Defenders Office.
Wednesday September 12, 6pm – 7.30pm
Best Community Development
26 – 28 St Andrews Avenue
Bookings/Registration essential at:
http://www.edovic.org.au/defending-environmental-laws-seminar-bendigo

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Angair Wildflower Weekend. Sept. 22 & 23 2012.
10am – 4.30pm Anglesea Memorial Hall, McMillan Street Anglesea.
Enquires info@angair.org.au or call 5263 1085 or www.angair.org.au

Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture.
Field Naturalist's Cub of Ballarat extends an invitation to attend the annual Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture.
Subject: The Flora and Fauna of Newstead.
Commences 8.00pm Friday Sept 7th 2012.
It will be held in the Primary Industries Training Centre, corner Gillies & Gregory Street, Ballarat. Admission free with supper.